

A Foundation for the Future

CFC Story of the Week -- Week 6

As their numbers decline, they appear to be an endangered species. NIH is concerned because the future of biomedical research may be jeopardized. We're not talking about some rare laboratory animal. We're worried about the dwindling numbers of physicians and dentists conducting clinical research. A CFC charity, however, has taken a small but important step to address the problem. In 1997, the [Foundation for NIH \(FNIH\)](#) started the Clinical Research Training Program (CRTP), a unique public/private initiative that trains clinical researchers at the NIH Clinical Center.



Dr. Richard Cannon, Clinical Director, NHLBI, stands behind CRTP Fellows, Jonathan Paul and Tiffany Powell.

For medical and dental school students interested in research, it's an opportunity of a lifetime. Tiffany Powell and Jonathan Paul took a year off before completing medical school to be CRTP fellows. "It's pretty amazing to be at a place like this," says Paul, who came from Emory University Medical School. "You can collaborate with people who are experts in almost any field." Powell, who came from Duke University Medical School, is also excited about doing bench-to-bedside research. "You have an opportunity to see how research is really related to taking care of patients."

Both Paul and Powell were thrilled to choose where they would work: the Cardiovascular Branch of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. The clinical research cardiologists there were also thrilled. "People really respect the program," says Powell, "and they wanted us here." She then explained how she and Paul are working on a research project to determine if G-CSF, a drug that mobilizes stem cells from the bone marrow into the circulation, can help grow new coronary blood vessels in patients who cannot be helped by current treatments for coronary heart disease.

CRTP fellows are valued for their energy, intelligence and creativity. "We don't become work horses for a lab," says Paul. He and Powell participated in discussions that led to an idea for a new protocol to see if exercise can mobilize stem cells naturally in patients with coronary heart disease. "It's kind of exciting," says Paul. "We're writing a new protocol right now . . . and hope to start recruiting patients before we leave." They both enjoy the camaraderie at NIH. "It's not just you out there," says Powell. "You're part of a community, sharing with each other."

[FNIH](#) funds CRTP with support from Pfizer Pharmaceuticals and coordinates the program through the NIH Office of Education. It is just one of the ways [FNIH](#) makes good things happen at NIH. [FNIH](#) is an independent, non-profit organization created by Congress to help NIH fulfill its mission. "We try to complement NIH initiatives," says [FNIH](#) Executive Director, Amy McGuire, "and develop public/private partnerships in education and research that benefit everyone."



Residents of the Edmond J. Safra Family Lodge (pictured above) will find the comforts of home as well as the support and companionship of others facing similar challenges.

One of [FNIH's](#) most visible projects will be the Edmond J. Safra Family Lodge, which is being built to provide a temporary home for families of patients participating in trials at the NIH Clinical Center. To identify future projects, [FNIH](#) entertains requests from NIH colleagues and private-sector partners. "Some of the best projects are proposed by people doing the work," says McGuire. For instance, Dr. Ann Berger, Chief of the Pain and Palliative Care Service at the Clinical Center, received [FNIH](#) support to show caregivers outside of NIH how she and her staff provide pain and palliative care. Of course, [FNIH](#) cannot fund every request, and it must work with institute and center directors to ensure that proposed programs coincide with their priorities.

[FNIH's](#) list of activities is growing as it initiates new educational and research projects. Included on this list are three large projects (1) Best Pharmaceuticals for Children, which supports studies to test drugs currently prescribed to children though they have only been tested for safety and efficacy in adults, (2) Over-coming Barriers to Early Phase Clinical Trials, which supports studies to increase accrual in initial studies to test new cancer therapies, and (3) the Osteoarthritis Initiative, which seeks to develop standardized ways to gage the progress of osteoarthritis.

[FNIH's](#) initial funding came from the Federal Government, pharmaceutical companies, and large donors. McGuire is pleased that more and more donations are coming from individuals who know and value the work NIH does. Donations from individuals form the foundation of most successful charities. McGuire is particularly encouraged by donations from NIH staff. "We're investing in NIH programs, and it makes a huge difference to us when NIH staff invests with us."

CFC Stories of the Week

Each week of the campaign, we will share a story that shows you how your CFC contribution can touch the lives of people you care about. We will mention a few charities along the way, but there are 3,000 charities in the CFC Catalog of Caring. More than one of them can help you make a difference to the people and causes you believe in. **[We encourage you to consider all the possibilities.](#)**

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